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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General and UNESCO Director-General launch 1995 International Year of Tolerance.

+ Secretary-General proposes establishment of small United Nations team to take over verification responsibilities and good offices when ONUSAL's mandate ends 30 April.

+ Tensions ease in Burundi capital; regional conference on refugees, returnees and displaced persons ends with plan of action to allow refugees in Great Lakes region to return home freely.

+ Haitian Provisional Electoral Council announces first round of parliamentary and local elections to take place 4 June; second round will be held 25 June.

+ UNHCR convoys to Bihac denied passage by Croat Serbs; Special Representative and UNPROFOR Force Commander meet with Croatian Serb leaders to demand end to humanitarian aid interference.

+ Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy recommends priority consideration of action relating to energy for rural development.

+ Final session of Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Climate Change approves recommendations on financial mechanism and guidelines for activities of subsidiary bodies.

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Tolerance did not mean accepting brutality disguised as nationalism or ignoring abuses against human rights if they assumed the cloak of religion, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today at a press conference launching the 1995 International Year for Tolerance. The Secretary-General said the importance of tolerance had been made tragically clear in recent years. Many people had sought security from vast technological advances,

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political transformation and economic uncertainty with increasingly narrow and exclusive ethnic, reglious or racial groupings. Too often, strife and suffering had followed.

The Secretary-General said that the international media could play an important role in promoting tolerance by bringing to light abuses against marginalized groups and by being wary of those who abused the power of the press to foment hatred. Member States would be able to focus on ways to advance tolerance during next month's World Summit for Social Development where "social disintegration" was one of the three major themes.

Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General of the United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said that fighting intolarence required both State action and individual responsibility. During the Year courageous decisions must be taken to increase peace-building and to strengthen early warning mechanisms and conflict prevention. There must be action to ensure the vitality of mixed societies, because every society in the world today was diverse in its own way, and not one was beyond the danger imposed by the infernal cycle of intolerance and violence.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended the establishment of a team of about eight professionals to take over the verification responsibilities and good offices of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) when its mandate ends on 30 April. In a note to the Security Council dated 17 February, the Secretary-General proposed that the team, accompanied by necessary support staff, be established initially for six months. It would verify the implementation of outstanding points on the peace agreements and provide a continuing flow of accurate and reliable information so that he could keep the Council informed.

The Secretary-General said there was continuing disquiet regarding the implementation of agreements concerning land, the difficult issue of human settlements, the judiciary, electoral reform and the binding recommendations of the Commission on the Truth. The recent forcible takeover of the Legislative Assembly and the Ministery of Finance and of land by members of the Association of Demobilized Members of the Armed Forces, which was diffused by ONUSAL, was one symptom of lingering discontent at the failure to implement some parts of the peace agreements.

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Tensions have eased in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, especially after the Opposition party, which now had a candidate for Prime Minister, called off the general strike, according to a United Nations spokesman.

The regional conference in Bujumbura on refugees, returnees and displaced persons concluded on Friday by approving a plan of action which would allow refugees in the Great Lakes region to return freely to their homes. The Conference, which was jointly sponsored by the United Nations High

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Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), called on Rwanda, Burundi and the asylum countries to take measures to ease tensions and create conditions for the safe return of the refugees.

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In Haiti, the Provisional Electoral Council has announced that the first round of parliamentary and local elections will take place on 4 June and the second round on 25 June, according to a United Nations spokesman. All 83 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, two thirds of the 27 seats in the Senate, and 2,200 State and local elected posts will be contested. The United Nations, which has set up an electoral trust fund for the Haitian electoral process, will observe the campaign and extend technical assistance. The Organization of American States (OAS) will monitor the elections themselves.

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A United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) convoy, which tried to reach the central Bihac pocket today through Croatian Serb controlled territory, was denied passage despite having received prior approval, according to a United Nations spokesman. The convoy was diverted to Velika Kladusa where it was waiting for "tedious negotiations" to allow it to pass through territory controlled by the Abdic forces. In the past, the Abdic forces had demanded an excessive share of the humanitarian aid.

A second convoy, which set out along the same route, was also denied passage by the Croatian Serbs and was expected to arrive in Velika Kladusa tomorrow. Only 223 metric tons of food out of a monthly target of nearly 2,000 metric tons had been delivered to the Bihac pocket in February. Last month, only 305 metric tons of aid reached the area. Elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the UNHCR was enjoying freedom of movement and humanitarian aid deliveries were proceeding normally.

Meanwhile, Special Representative Yasushi Akashi and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) Commander, General Bertrand de Lapresele, were in Knin, where they met with top Croatian Serb military and political leaders. Mr. Akashi demanded that the Croatian Serbs end their interference with humanitarian aid deliveries into the Bihac pocket. The increasingly urgent effort to end the 4 year-old Croatian war and matters relating to the economic agreement of 2 December were also discussed.

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The Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development has recommended that States, United Nations bodies and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations be asked to give priority consideration to a wide range of actions relating to energy for rural development. The recommendations were made at the end of the Committee's two-week special session in its report to the Commission on Sustainable Development.

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The Committee recommended that States which had not already done so be invited to formulate and begin implementing national plans of action on energy for sustainable agriculture and rural development not later than the year 2000. Such national action plans should give special attention to the sustainable development and efficient use of biomass as a source of energy.

Another recommendation was that priority consideration be given to the launching of a global initiative, before the year 2000, to facilitate the efforts of developing countries to bring electric power to rural and isolated areas. The initiative would be launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the Global Environmental Facility, and would be based on successes already achieved in such renewable energy technologies as photovoltaic, wind and mini-hydro energy.

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The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change has approved proposals on the financial mechanism for the Convention and guidelines for the activities of its subsidiary bodies in its final session. The proposals will be submitted to the first Conference of the Parties to the Convention, scheduled for Berlin in March.

The Committee, which met from 6 to 17 February, deferred approval of the draft rules of procedure for the Conference and adopted its report. Other recommendations approved dealt with temporary arrangements between the Committee and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and guidelines for methodologies which parties could follow in creating inventories on national greenhouse gases and assessing climate change impacts.

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